

Best Of

Tree Country

the external newsletter of the SC Forestry Commission

FALL 2020



South Carolina
Forestry Commission

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Best of Tree Country

Best of Tree Country is published quarterly by the South Carolina Forestry Commission in the winter, spring, summer and fall.

The Commission is solely responsible for the content of this newsletter, but welcomes appropriate submissions from allied organizations, industry partners, consultant foresters, elected officials, landowners and private citizens.

Please contact SCFC Director of Communications Doug Wood at (803) 896-8820 or dwood@scfc.gov to submit information, articles and/or photographs.

The Forestry Commission reserves the right to edit or exclude submissions based on its own editorial criteria.

South Carolina Forestry Commission
5500 Broad River Road, Columbia SC 29212
(803) 896-8800 | www.trees.sc.gov



ON THE COVER

The cover photo features a stack of timber at the Georgia Pacific mill in Prosperity.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Success Stories

A new Wood Magic Forest Fair video was completed, and a newly revised strategic plan marks a milestone for the SCFC.



SCFC Assists with Chester Fire

Forestry Commission resources provided assistance at a fire at the Carolina Poly plant in Chester in August.



Asian Longhorned Beetle found in SC

An Asian longhorned beetle infestation has been detected in the community of Hollywood, near Charleston.



Warbler Boxes Installed on HSF

The Forestry Commission's environmental education staff installed 10 prothonotary warbler boxes on Harbison State Forest.



Be Pro, Be Proud SC Holds Event

Be Pro Be Proud SC launched with a kick-off event Sept. 3 at the South Carolina State Farmers Market in Columbia.



A screenshot of the house in the video.

SUCCESS STORIES



Lexington/Richland Project Forester also makes an appearance in the video, along with some footage from Sand Hills State Forest.

New Forestry Education Video - “A Tree’s Dream”

If you have ever attended the introduction of the Wood Magic Forest Fair program, you have probably watched a video about “Fred” the tree who has a dream to become part of a family’s home. That video has been watched by thousands of children and adults and has been used for almost 20 years. The story followed Fred from the forest, to the mill, to all the products that were in the home (as well as other forest products) while also teaching the economic, environmental and social benefits of sustainable forest management. The message of teaching children about forest products and sustainable forestry was great, but the video had become dated.

In 2019, members of forestry organizations from South Carolina and Georgia met to discuss remaking the video that was owned by the Southern Forest Products Association (SFPA). The SFPA gave permission to remake the video using the same script, and the new video was entitled,

“A Tree’s Dream.” The Langdale Company in Georgia agreed to film and produce the video at no cost. SCFC Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright volunteered his vocal talents to narrate the video and twice traveled to Valdosta, Ga. for audio recordings. SCFC Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel and Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley organized a curriculum team to write accompanying lessons on various forestry topics for teachers to use with the video.

Project members include the South Carolina and Georgia Forestry Commissions, Langdale Company, NC and SC Forestry Associations, Dixon Taylor Construction, Firm Foundation Custom Construction, Keystone Forestry, Mullis Logging, Nijum Developments, Lost Dogs

Found, Southern Builders, Southern Forest Products Association, and Lowndes County Schools. Project members will share and promote the video and lessons to various education and forestry organizations.

We hope educators will be showing the “A Tree’s Dream” video across the nation! Please watch the video on the Langdale Company’s YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=777wq0VIEFg>. A dedicated webpage is being developed that will house the video and accompanying lessons.

Newly Revised Strategic Plan Marks Milestone for Agency

There was no fanfare – no celebrations, press releases or grand pronouncements otherwise – but Thursday, Aug. 6 marked an important milestone for the South Carolina Forestry Commission. The agency quietly embarked on a new era that day when the board of commissioners adopted a newly revised strategic plan that will continue to guide our organization toward maximum effectiveness and accountability.

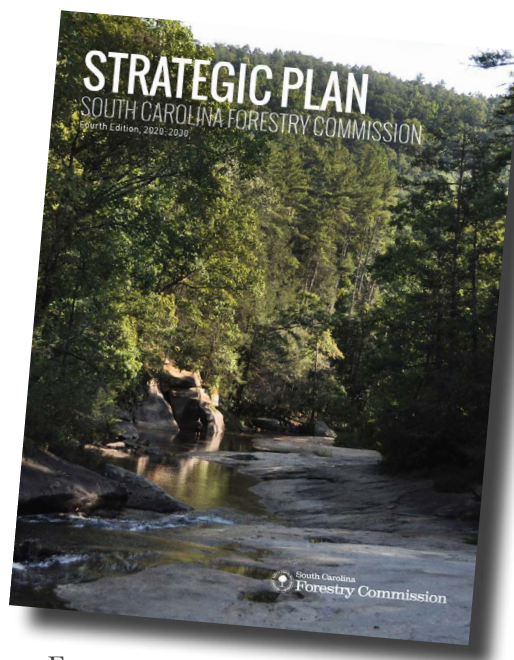


The retooling of the strategic plan and its accompanying quarterly progress report was one of several of State Forester Scott Phillips' major initiatives announced at the beginning of his tenure in January 2018.

Several years in the making, the new and highly improved strategic plan refocuses the five mission-critical areas of the agency's infrastructure by tying very specific performance measures to the key services that the Forestry Commission provides. It was developed with the feedback garnered in multiple, successive strategic planning meetings consisting of different groups of agency stakeholders, all of which were moderated by consultants Nathan Strong and Tom Terez. Further strengthening this development process was an agency-wide survey in which all employees had the opportunity to both evaluate the nascent plan and offer their own constructive criticism.

This new quantitative approach to determining our degree of mission accomplishment represents a major departure from the largely qualitative report that preceded it. While the previous strategic plan did collect some trackable statistical data about some of our service levels, it was still largely narrative-based and less reflective of the complete scope of work that our agency does.

The strategic plan now centers its attention exclusively on measurable components of performance across all divisions of the agency. Organized by the five principal areas, or goals, of our agency's multifaceted mission – Enhance Public Benefits From Trees And Forests, Protect Forests From Harm, Conserve Working



Forests, Raise Awareness About Our Forests and Strengthen The Commission For The Future – the plan lays out explicit strategies supporting each goal, and the achievement of each of the strategies is gauged by a combination of individual and composite key performance indicators (KPIs).

One example of a standalone performance metric, or KPI, is the agency's turnover rate, which is calculated simply by taking the number of separations each month and dividing by the total number of employees for the same period.

A composite measure, on the other hand, is an index made up of several individual KPIs. An example of this kind of aggregated measure in the new strategic plan is the Landowner Services Index, which synthesizes individual KPIs into a single score, in this case the 1)percent service contracts completed, 2)acres prescribed-burned under service contracts, 3)acres of standby service delivered, 4)miles of firebreaks installed, 5)number of water bars constructed and 6)total revenue from service activities.

Not only does the new strategic plan place its emphasis solely on these data-based performance metrics, but it also now aligns – by design – the agency's goal-level aspirations with the long-term strategies reported in the agency's Forest Action Plan, which we update and submit to the US Forest Service every 10 years. This is especially practical because the Forest Action Plan serves as the underpinning for funds that we and other state forestry agencies solicit as part of grant-writing activities every year. Now that the two plans conform to each other in scope and detail, prospective SCFC grant writers can target the USFS' national priorities by referencing the needs of our own agency. Forest Management Chief Russell Hubright deserves high praise for his role in coordinating the alignment of the Forest Action Plan with the Strategic Plan. Their development would not have been possible without all of the extra time, consideration and work he contributed to navigating this year-long process.

Finally, this new strategic plan is different in that it will be shared by everyone in the agency. Previously, only certain employees contributed to the reporting for the strategic plan, which had not been shared widely with the entire SCFC family. Now the plan is available for anyone in the agency to review and contribute to; both the plan itself (<http://trees.sc.gov/docs/strategicplan.pdf>) and the companion document of key performance indicators (<http://trees.sc.gov/docs/keyindicators.pdf>) are available online.

Please take time to review both documents, and feel free to suggest improvements at any time.



Protection Chief Darryl Jones provided an aerial view of the fire in the incident command post.

SCFC Assists With Chester Plant Fire

The Carolina Poly plant on S.C. Highway 9 in Chester caught fire before dawn Aug. 24 and continued to burn into the evening. Firefighters had difficulty containing the blaze.

Fire departments from as far as Gaffney responded and 10 state and county agencies were on site with 60-70 personnel working to control the blaze and make safety decisions. Five firefighters were taken to the hospital, four with heat-related injuries and one with a foot injury.

The fire involved wooden pallets, plastics on materials and pallets, trailers and other materials such as tires on the trailers. There also was some oil in drums involved in the fire.

The Forestry Commission was on the scene working to establish a fire break in nearby woods to keep the fire from spreading, and Protection Chief Darryl Jones was providing aerial views from a drone for the incident command post. Darryl provided both visual and thermal images and flew every half hour during the active burning, and once an hour as things moderated.

Our firefighters did an awesome

job establishing a firebreak between the burning plastics and the adjacent woods that was used to hold the fire. In addition to our dozers, some other equipment was on site, a privately owned dozer, a track hoe and a bobcat. At the high point there were around 170 firefighters engaged, including nine ladder trucks, engines, tankers, and support vehicles, along with EMD, EMS and assets from Firefighter

Mobilization. EPA and DHEC were on scene monitoring air quality too, and luckily the plume was being pushed away from the command post.

SCFC Resources that assisted: Cherokee/Chester/York Sector FMO Matt Gordon, Cherokee/Chester/York Sector Forestry Technicians Jim Zelenak, Michael Walley, John Scott Cloninger, and Piedmont East Unit Forester Jeff Riggan.



You could see dark smoke from the fire in Chester from Chief Pilot Sam Anderson's home five miles away.

Joint Fire Training Held at Sand Hills State Forest

Forestry Commission personnel conducted joint training with the SC National Guard to practice aerial firefighting operations at Sand Hills State Forest July 11-12. There was joint training in the classroom and in the field.

Classroom training for air and ground crews was conducted July 10 by Chief Pilot Sam Anderson and Protection Chief Darryl Jones. The training covered wildfire suppression tactics, communications between aircraft and ground resources, and fire shelter training.

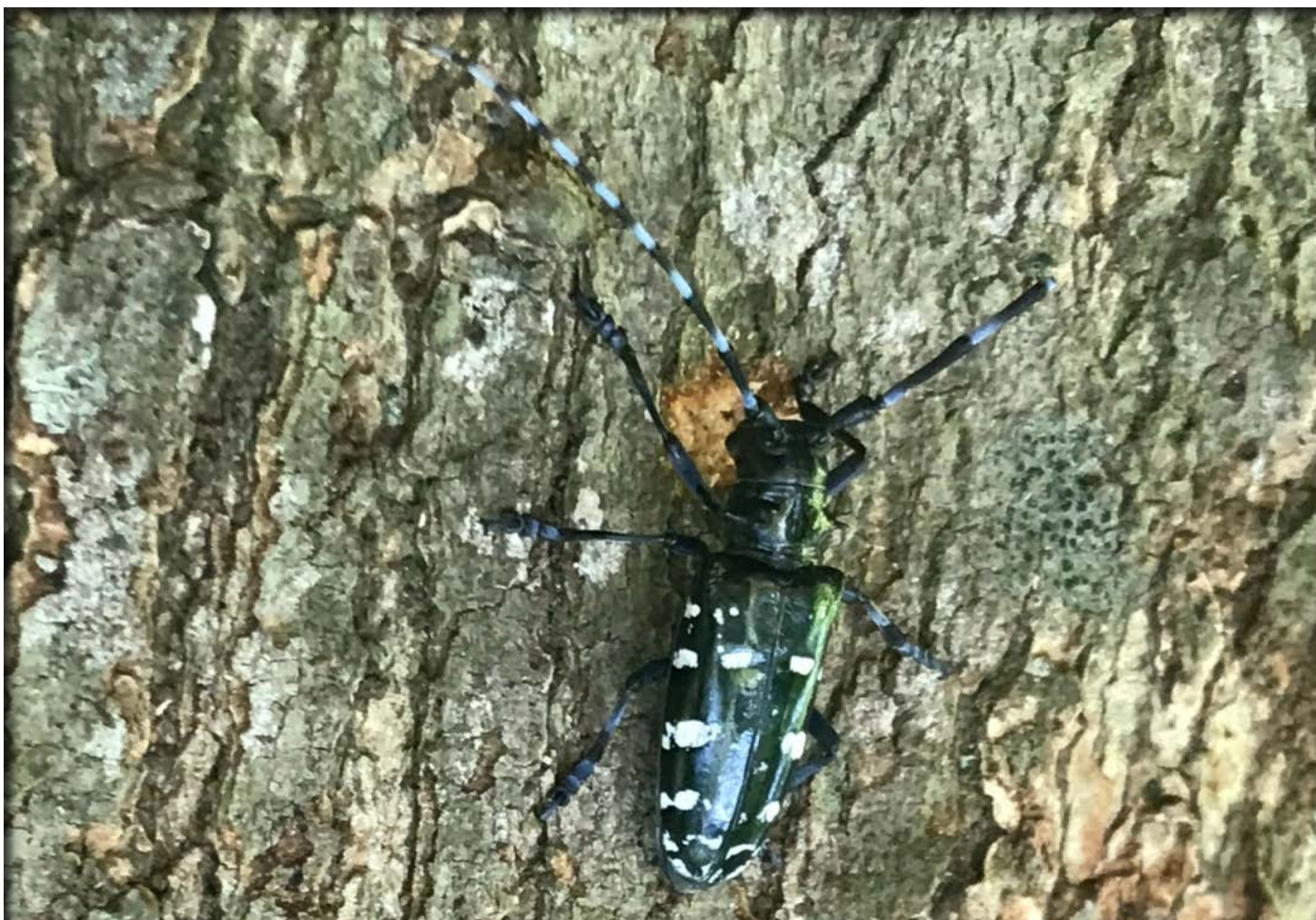
On July 11, three UH-60 Blackhawks, multiple aircrews and support personnel from A Company, 1st Battalion, 111th Aviation Regiment participated in training at Sand Hills State Forest with approximately 15 SCFC firefighters. After a joint safety and operational briefing, three small burn units were ignited, and SCFC ground crews practiced requesting and targeting Bambi Bucket drops from aircraft to test communications, coordinated air space, and ensured directions for water drops were clear and understood by both air and ground resources. National Guard crews were able to practice proficiency using Bambi Buckets, timing of bucket drops while flying over smoke and fire on the ground, communication among crews and aircraft, and refueling. Special thanks to Brian Davis and the staff at Sand Hills State Forest!



Protective Chief Darryl Jones is geared up and strapped in to observe the National Guard fire training at Sand Hills July 11-12.



SCFC personnel call in the location for the helicopter to drop.



The adults have white spots, and their antennae are conspicuously banded with white and black.

Asian Longhorned Beetle Detected in South Carolina

A vigilant homeowner near Charleston found a dead beetle May 29. They thought it might be an Asian longhorned beetle and contacted Clemson's Department of Plant Industry (DPI). The specimen was quickly confirmed by DPI and USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to be the Asian longhorned beetle.

The Asian longhorned beetle is native to China and Korea and has a relatively broad host range, feeding on a number of hardwood trees, such as maples, elms and willows, among many others. However, maple is the most commonly infested tree in North America. The adult females chew notches in the bark of the host tree and lay a single egg in the cambium layer. Eggs can

hatch within two weeks with warmer temperatures but may take as long as a month and half if temperatures are cooler. The larvae feed in the cambium layer when they first hatch, but move



Infested trees have round exit holes $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch in diameter and may have coarse sawdust at the base of the tree and oozing sap from wounds.

into the heartwood as they grow. Mature larvae can be two inches long. In warmer climates, like South Carolina's, the Asian longhorned beetle can mature and emerge in a single year, but takes two years in colder regions. Their feeding eventually kills the limbs and trunk by removing the cambium layer.

FOREST HEALTH

—David Jenkins

The infestation is currently thought to be limited to the community of Hollywood, near Charleston, but ongoing surveys will determine the extent of the infestation. Infested trees must be destroyed to limit the spread of this pest. The good news is that this pest

has been successfully eradicated from several locations in North America, so there is hope! However, the infestation in Charleston includes maples in swamps that will be difficult to destroy on site.

What to look for: The beetles are distinct and hard to mistake for other longhorned beetles in the region, except the cottonwood borer (<https://bugguide.net/node/view/7956>). The adults are large (0.6-1.6 inches long), have shiny black elytra (the hard wing covering) with white spots and their antennae are conspicuously banded

with white and black. Infested trees have round exit holes 3/8 to 3/4 of an inch in diameter and may have coarse sawdust at the base of the tree and oozing sap from wounds.

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) used tree rings around damage caused by Asian longhorned beetle to assess the age of the infestations. The oldest infestation was found to be seven years old. More samples are being collected to confirm this result.

More information can be found at:

<https://newsstand.clemson.edu/mediarelations/inspectors-survey-low-country-trees-after-invasive-beetle-discovered/>

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2020/sa-06/alb-sc

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/pests-diseases/asian-longhorned-beetle>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/pests-diseases/hungry-pests/the-threat/asian-longhorned-beetle/asian-longhorned-beetle>

Emerald Ash Borer Grand SLAM: Slow Ash Mortality

The South Carolina Forestry Commission's Forest Health Division has teamed up with the Lexington Blowfish baseball team to educate the public about the emerald ash borer and other invasive species impacting South Carolina's forests.

A grant titled "The Grand SLAM: Slowing Ash Mortality in the South" was proposed by Virginia's Forest Health Coordinator and includes South Carolina and North Carolina. These states received funds to conduct outreach events at minor-league baseball games.

FOREST HEALTH

—David Jenkins

For many years bats made of ash wood were preferred by baseball players. Bats made with hickory, an early favorite, are heavier and harder to swing. Ash bats are light, and their grain provides a nice "bounce" to batted balls. Ash is increasingly being replaced by maple, a denser and stiffer wood. Also, North American ash is under threat by the emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle that destroys



The ash banner at Lexington Blowfish park draws attention to the emerald ash borer and other invasives.

ash trees.

Although the beetle was first detected in South Carolina in 2017, the first infested trees were only found this year! Currently the emerald ash borer has been recorded from Anderson, Oconee, Pickens, Greenville, Spartanburg, and York counties and will likely spread throughout the state.

By teaming up with minor league baseball, we can educate the public about the dangers of emerald ash borer and other invasive insects and plants and how they adversely impact ecosystems and economies. We can teach them to identify many of the most common threats and highlight behaviors that increase the risk of spreading these organisms, such as



Jenkins with bat winner Kendra Hucks and her mother July 24.

moving firewood.

Forest Health Coordinator David Jenkins will be at all Lexington Blowfish Friday night home games this summer to give away an ash bat to a lucky fan each night and to highlight invasive species and our Don't Move Firewood campaign! Join us for some FUN!!!

SCFC Loans John De La Howe School Old Equipment

In an effort to add to the hands-on training the John de la Howe School for Agriculture offers its forestry and agriculture students, the Forestry Commission donated a 1996 John Deere 450G bulldozer to the school July 17.

The school, which is located in McCormick, will use the dozer to train its students on the operation and maintenance of forestry equipment. John de la Howe Director of Agricultural and Forestry Operations Frank Dorn couldn't have been more thankful for the donation, which was spearheaded by SCFC Equipment Coordinator Doug Mills.

"We really appreciate the donation," he said. "A lot of these kids have never had the opportunity to be on any equipment, so I think it's a great opportunity for them to learn how to operate it. Not only will they learn to run a piece of equipment, but they'll also do maintenance on it. They are going to get all kinds of experience with this equipment."

This isn't the first time the agency has sent equipment to the school.



Equipment Coordinator Doug Mills (far right) delivered the equipment to John de la Howe School July 17.

The Commission donated a dozer and transport unit several years ago, and Dorn said they've put it to good use, clearing land, cleaning around ponds that were overgrown, and cutting trails into the forest for hiking and horseback riding, among other things.

John de la Howe has the first statewide agricultural education program of its kind in the nation, providing students hands-on training in the fields of agriculture, agribusiness, forestry, land

management and food science.

"There will be three directions they can go in," Dorn explained. "They can go into forestry and wildlife management, plant and animal science, or they can do horticulture, turfgrass and landscape maintenance. The dozer is going to be used by all of them."

John de la Howe is in the heart of Sumter National Forest and has 1,310 acres of forests and farmland. For more information about the school, visit <https://delahowe.sc.gov>.

New Service Offered to Extract Mired Forestry Equipment

Forestry Commission employees have received several requests during the past few years to pull skidders and other equipment out of a bog. The agency sought and received an Attorney General's opinion, which ruled

that the SCFC is allowed to provide extraction services for

private contractors performing forestry services for forest landowners. The Forestry Commission's Board of Commissioners approved this type of service at its November 2019 meeting.

Some of the restrictions on this service include the following:

- This service will not be provided during high fire danger.
- Requests will only be received Monday-Friday, and calls received after 2 p.m. will be handled no sooner than the next business day.

SCFC personnel retain the right to refuse to provide this service if it cannot be carried out safely and without damaging agency or contractor equipment.

Extracting Forestry Equipment Cost

Medium Tractor - \$350 for first hour. \$200 for each additional hour. Minimum charge -\$350.

Large Tractor - \$400 for first hour. \$250 for each additional hour. Minimum charge - \$400.

MANAGEMENT

-Russell Hubright

State Forests Get New Monument Signs

All five of the state forests have new signs to match the headquarters and regional offices. Signs were installed the last week of June and now have a consistent look statewide.



Prothonotary Warbler Boxes Installed on Harbison

Harbison State Forest received 10 prothonotary warbler boxes from SC Wildlife Federation Habitat Education Manager Jay Keck. Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley and Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel assisted Jay with installing the nesting boxes. Five boxes were installed on posts along Harbison State Forest's Nicholas Creek, which is near the river field. Five more boxes were installed on trees along Middle Creek near the canoe landing. Jay is interested to see if the nesting success will be different in the post mounted boxes versus the tree mounted boxes.



Left: SCFC Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley takes a GPS point of the newly installed nesting box. The prothonotary warbler boxes will be cleaned out once a year. Right: Matt mounts a nesting box on a tree next to Middle Creek.

EDUCATION

—Beth Foley

Prothonotary warbler populations have significantly declined in the past due to habitat loss. These warblers nest in

cavities in trees or nest boxes in wooded swamps and forested wetlands.

Removal of standing dead trees and channeling of streams can affect availability of nest sites as well as nest success. Their population numbers have

started to increase in some areas thanks to conservationists putting up nesting boxes. Prothonotary warblers breed all throughout South Carolina but are more commonly seen in the bottomland hardwood forests of the Lowcountry.

SCFC Virtual Forestry Merit Badge Workshop Goes Nationwide

When the in-person Forestry Merit Badge Workshop in May had to be canceled because of the risk of COVID-19, Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley and Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel (former member of Troop 500 of the Great Trails Council) had to get creative to continue to offer the merit badge to scouts. With support of the BSA Scouts of America Indian Waters Council in South Carolina, a new virtual Forestry Merit Badge Workshop was created so that scouts didn't lose out on the opportunity to earn the badge and learn about forestry. Education staff created a new interactive live webinar workshop with 82 scouts participating across the country!

Here is a list of all the councils across the nation who had Scouts participate: Baltimore Area, Bay Area, Blackhawk Area, Blue Ridge, Catalina, Chester County, Circle Ten, Connecticut Rivers, Dan Beard, Denver Area, French Creek, Golden Empire, Grand Canyon, Great Smoky Mountain, Great Trail, Greater Alabama, Greater Los Angeles Area, Greater Niagara Frontier, Hawk Mountain, Heart of America, Hudson Valley, Indian Waters, Lake Erie, Laurel Highlands, Mecklenburg



County, Michigan Crossroads, Mid-America, Mount Baker, National Capital Area, Northern Star, Palmetto, Pathway to Adventure, Patriots' Path, Sam Houston Area, Samoset, Sioux, Southwest Florida, Tecumseh, The Spirit of Adventure, Twin Rivers, Twin Valley, Westark Area and Western Los Angeles County.

During the webinar, scouts were completing their forestry workbook and learning about topics such as tree identification, silvicultural practices, forestry education and careers, hazard tree identification and removal, forest ecology, tree needs and growth patterns, and other topics to learn about forest conservation. The workshop was so popular that it was offered again July 8.

EDUCATION

—Matt Schnabel

Camp Conservation Held in Newberry County

Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley and Education Coordinator Matt Schnabel assisted with an in-person educational program June 23.

Newberry Soil and Water Conservation District Coordinator Joe Berry hosted “Camp Conservation” for Newberry County residents. Camp Conservation is a five-day summer camp to explore conservation topics including wildlife, recycling, farming and forestry to name a few. Forty-five students, ages 6 to 14, participated in the program this year despite the current pandemic.

EDUCATION

—Beth Foley

Camp Conservation did a great job with implementation of health and safety guidelines for campers, parents, volunteers and instructors, as well as supplied plenty of hand sanitizer and disinfectant for materials.

Matt and Beth assisted with one day of the camp and led a forestry-related learning station. Students learned



Assistant Education Coordinator Beth Foley instructing students on how to use a Biltmore stick.

about the importance of forestry and why it has such a big economic impact on our state. Campers gained experience using Biltmore sticks to measure the height and diameter of trees in order to learn how foresters

calculate the volume of wood in a forest stand. Younger students participated in a nature scavenger hunt and learned about food webs and energy flow within a forest ecosystem.

Prescribed Burning Resumes Amid Covid-19



Lexington/Richland Project Forester Madison Graham and Piedmont Firewise Field Coordinator Chris Revels string fire on Congaree National Park.

SCFC employees assisted Congaree National Park June 3 with the first prescribed burn by the National Park Service in the Appalachian, Piedmont, Coastal Zone (Fire Management Zone of the Southeast Region National Park Service) since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Assisting with the burn were Piedmont East Unit Forester Jeff Riggan, Supply Manager Kerry Boyle, Lexington/Richland Project Forest Forester Madison Graham, SPB Coordinator Tyler Greiner and Piedmont Firewise Field Coordinator Chris Revels.

The Continuum in Lake City is an impressive wooden structure.

Lake City's Continuum: An Impressive Wood Structure

Recently, my wife and I traveled to her home in Lake City to visit with family and friends. For those who aren't familiar with Lake City's downtown transformation, there is something new to see each time we visit. The Inn at the Crossroads is one of our favorite hotels as it is filled with historic photos featuring the area's agricultural and forestry past. After checking into our room, one look out of the bedroom window toward the Continuum next door led me back outside to explore the wood structure. The

Continuum is a regional center for education and workforce development; a collaboration among Florence Darlington Technical College, Francis Marion University and The Greater Lake City Foundation. The Continuum's vision and curriculum is innovative, as is the building that houses it.

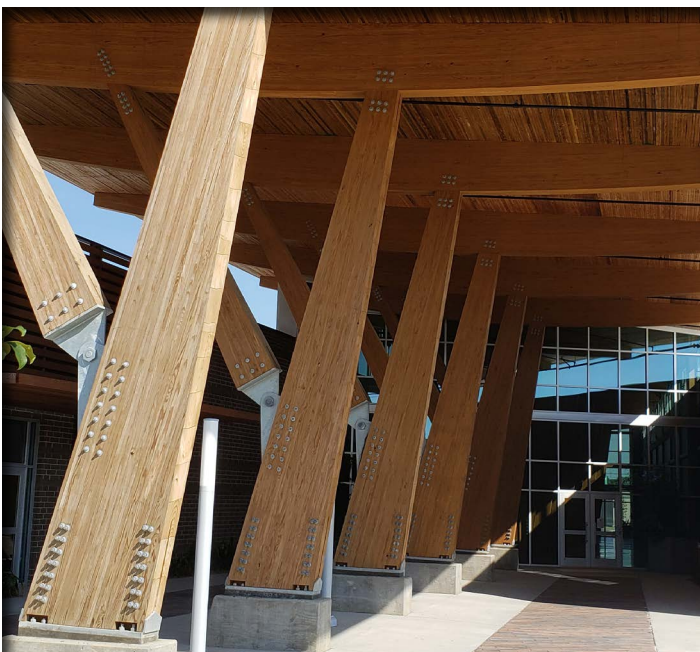
The 46,000 square-foot facility was designed by McMillan Pazdan Smith, Engineering News-Record's 2019 Southeast Design Firm of the Year. The impressive wooden structure features large-scale glulam members and a nail-laminated timber deck. Use of wood produced a lighter-weight structure than

concrete and steel, along with a smaller carbon footprint and superior strength. The look and feel of the building is reminiscent of the region's barns and outbuildings. The large wooden structure continues from the outside to create a main corridor at the center of the building.

The unique design of this facility deserves the attention of the forestry community. Like the Snow Center at Clemson University, mass timber structures are gaining favor in the architectural world. South Carolina now has some excellent examples of how mass timber can be utilized for its environmental, economic and aesthetic benefits. Stop by and visit the Continuum on your next trip to the beach, or just make Lake City your destination.

FOREST RESOURCE

—Tim Adams



Closeup of exterior section of the mass timber structure.

Be Pro, Be Proud SC Launches with Kickoff Event

Be Pro Be Proud SC, a workforce development project designed to close the skills gap in South Carolina, launched with a kick-off event Sept. 3 at the South Carolina State Farmers Market in Columbia. Governor Henry McMaster has partnered with several state agencies and the Associated Industries of S.C. Foundation, an umbrella non-profit group whose membership includes more than a dozen trade associations, including the Forestry Association of South Carolina and the SC Chamber of Commerce, to promote this statewide training program for many different skilled professional careers.

SCFC Commissioner Josh Sandt serves on the steering committee of the Associated Industries of S.C. Foundation.

FOREST RESOURCE

—Tim Adams

The centerpiece of the launch event was a custom-designed, 53-foot 18-wheeler featuring hands-on simulators for commercial driving, heavy equipment operation, carpentry, welding and other job skills. The mobile lab will visit schools and events statewide. South Carolina is the second state in the country, following Arkansas' lead, to implement the Be Pro Be Proud movement. The goal of the program is to raise awareness among South Carolina students of the need for technical workers in the construction, trucking and related industries. Associated Industries of SC Foundation's members include the SC Trucking Association; Carolina's Associated



Governor McMaster and Associated Industries of South Carolina Foundation leadership hold a ribbon cutting event at the SC State Farmers Market.



Resource Development Director Tim Adams tries his hand at operating the trucking simulator.

General Contractors; Forestry Association of SC; SC Chamber of Commerce; SC Farm Bureau Federation, SC Petroleum Marketers Association; South Carolina Timber Producers Association; Palmetto Agribusiness Council; SC Motor Coach Association; Carolinas Ready-Mix Association; SC Propane Gas Association, SC Beverage

Association, SC Retail Federation, SC Beer Wholesalers Association and the SC Asphalt Pavement Association.

The state agencies supporting the BePro BeProud initiative are the SC Technical College System, SC Department of Employment and Workforce and the SC Department of Commerce.

Fire Weather Outlook

SOUTHERN AREA

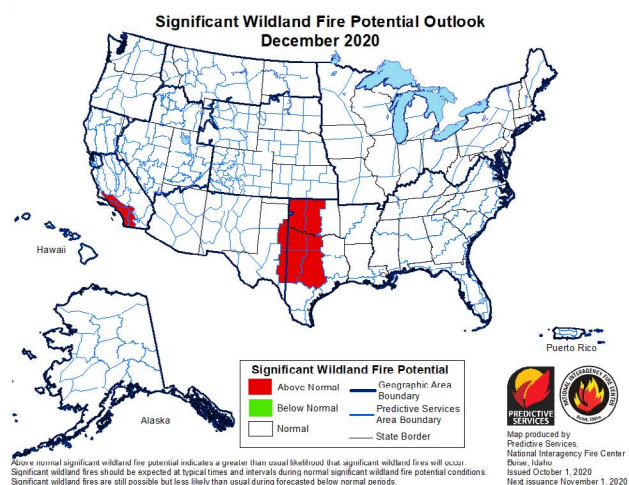
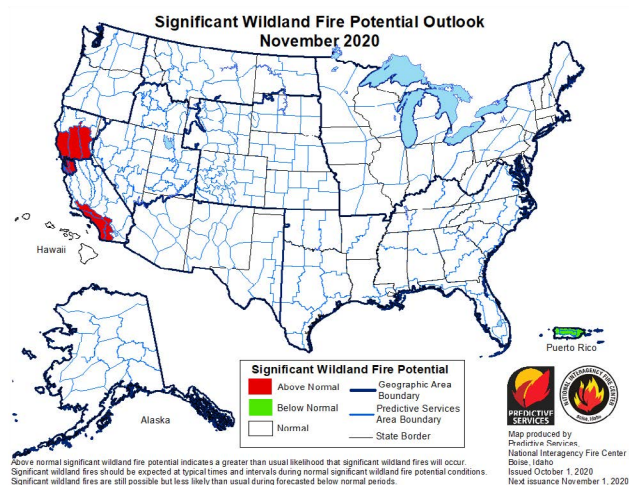
Overall, a generalized upward trend back to normal significant fire potential is expected for most of the Southern Area through fall. This is due to the broader warmer and drier weather resulting from the strengthening La Niña and other supporting intraseasonal atmospheric oscillations. The ongoing exceptional rain producing tropical pattern will continue to mute fire danger in central and southeast states of the geographic area but will begin to weaken. Most of the Southern Area is forecast to have normal significant fire potential through February except for areas of Oklahoma and central and west Texas where a warmer and drier fall and winter is expected.

Except for drought conditions in west Texas and western Oklahoma, the rest of the Southern Area is essentially drought free courtesy of a wet pattern during summer into fall, including a very active tropical cyclone season. Through January, drought is likely to develop and spread across Oklahoma and Texas due to multiple large-scale climate pattern signals.

Fire activity has been minimal and below normal for most of the geographic area through October due to weather and climate teleconnections associated with ENSO and the Madden-Julian Oscillation. More recently, Texas began to experience more precipitation, which reduced fire activity. Frosts and freezes have produced cured vegetation, which increase quick response drying and an increase in ignition potential during periods of low relative humidity. Fuel moistures continue to trend at well above average levels across all fuel classes except for western areas of Oklahoma and Texas. With a drying trend expected, the exceptionally high fuel moistures should begin to decrease through fall into winter.

Expecting broader, enhanced drying during November due to a strengthening La Niña. Antecedent very moist fuel conditions from September, potential dry episodes during October, fall freeze events, and the unfolding fall leaf drop complicate the outlook for November. While timing of these events will be critical, conditions seem borderline at this time for precisely indicating above normal significant fire potential. With drier and warmer conditions anticipated, managers should plan for at least normal significant fire potential.

Except for western Oklahoma and areas of central and west Texas, winter significant fire potential should remain mostly normal. As La Niña continues to strengthen in the tropical Pacific, weather patterns should produce broadly warmer and drier than normal conditions across the Southern Area. Some periodic increases in ignition risks (mainly fine fuel drying episodes) are likely across the more southern states. Cured grasses and a dry winter forecast could keep western Oklahoma and areas of central and west Texas in elevated to above normal fire risk. The fire season in Texas typically begins January into February, but if antecedent conditions trend drier as they currently are, the season could start in mid-December.



—National Interagency Fire Center

CURRENT FIRE NUMBERS FOR SOUTH CAROLINA

MONTH AND YEAR TO DATE COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS 5- AND 10-YEAR AVERAGE

Time Period	OCT		JULY-OCT		FISCAL YEAR	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
5 Year Average	75	257.1	336	1,659.7	1,350	10,517.6
10 Year Average	87	271.0	360	1,701.0	1,709	11,824.2
Current FY ¹	9	30.1	78	223.4	78	223.4

¹To date for current fiscal year

